

the Alps. Panrionia had been ravaged by the Sar-matse and the Quadi, In successive invasions the Goths had overrun Dacia; had poured round the Black Sea or crossed it on shipboard; had sacked Trebizond and Chalcedon, and, after traversing Bi-thynia, had reached the coast at Ephesus. Others had advanced into Greece and Macedonia and challenged the Roman navies for the possession of Crete.

Not only was Armenia lost, but the Parthians had passed the Euphrates, vanquished and taken prisoner the Emperor Valerian, and surprised the city of Antioch while the inhabitants were idly gathered in the theatre. Valerian, chained and robed in purple, was kept alive to act as Sapor's footstool; when he died his skin was tanned and stuffed with straw and set to grace a Parthian temple. Egypt was in the hands of a rebel who had cut off the grain supply. And as if such misfortunes were not enough, there was a succession of terrifying and destructive earthquakes, which wrought their worst havoc in Asia, though they were felt in Rome and Egypt. These too were followed by a pestilence which raged for fifteen years and, according to Eutropius, claimed, when at its height, as many as five thousand victims in a single day.

It looked, indeed, as though the Roman Empire were past praying for and its destruction certain.* The armies were in wide-spread revolt. Rebel usurpers succeeded one another so fast that the period came to be known as that of the Thirty Tyrants,

* *Jam desperatis rebus et dehto posne imperio Romano* (Eutropius iv., c. 9).